

# Expert advises vigilance to keep kids safe

## *Pedophiles, predators pose threat at home, online*

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample  
American Forces Press Service

They come from all ethnic backgrounds. About 95 percent are males, 70 percent are white, and they're only about 15 years old when they start molesting children.

Tom Smith, commander of Detachment 344, Air Force Office of Special Investigation, spent a year working with the FBI profiling child molesters.

Smith said there are two main types of molesters: the situational and the preferential.

The situational molester is not the stereotypical pedophile – the “guy in the trench coat,” Smith said. “This guy actually doesn't prefer sex with little children,” he continued.

“He may molest a child because he's under an unusual amount of stress,” Smith said, “or maybe because of boredom or curiosity.”

The more serious predators are the preferential variety. Smith characterized them as molesters who lack interpersonal skills, and who will attack strangers and very young children, even infants.

Also, the preferential molester is more likely to lure children away or abduct them by force, he said.

These criminals aim to inflict pain on their victims, and sometimes will kill them, Smith said.

One method the preferential molester uses to get close to victims is to shower children and families with gifts. Another is to offer reasons to be with or near children.

This kind of molester, Smith said, often spends weeks, months or even years with a potential victim before an act of inappropriate fondling may occur.

Startlingly, molesters and victims are related in a third of the known cases, Smith said.

He advised parents to be suspicious of anyone who is

### Child-protection tips

#### Babysitters and child care

- Seek recommendations from friends and family.
- Advertise only in “known areas” (for example, at one's church or a local high school).
- Interview candidates extensively – and with your child present.
- Observe the interaction between your child and the potential sitter.
- If using a service, verify how (and how well) employees are screened.
- Demand references – and check them thoroughly.

#### Internet activities

- Never let children exchange e-mails with – or especially send photos to – someone they (and you) don't know.
- Never allow children to meet alone in person with someone they “met” online.
- Establish, maintain and enforce boundaries for Internet activities: time of day, length of time online and acceptable/unacceptable sites.
- Monitor bulletin board and chat room access – and contact authorities regarding any questionable content.

*You won't believe the stuff that people will say to your children on the Internet.*

**Tom Smith**  
*Air Force Office of  
Special Investigation*

possibility of their seeing this type of material.”

Smith said pedophiles use Internet bulletin boards and chat rooms to gain children's trust and confidence.

“If your children ever feel threatened, or pressured, or made to feel uncomfortable, be sure they know to tell a parent or to contact the online service,” Smith said.

Parents should never allow their children to give out their home address, home or work telephone numbers or the name and location of their school while online.

Children should never agree to send or e-mail their photograph to someone they do not know. “The next thing you know, you see your child's face on someone else's naked body. This can happen,” Smith warned.

Children should not be allowed to meet with anyone they “met” online unless in a public place and a parent or guardian is present, he advised. Also, parents should set rules for children's Internet use – time of day, length of time to be online and appropriate sites to visit.

Smith said he isn't trying to scare parents, but warns that a lot can happen “out there” if they're not careful.

“Most people, after hearing this, just want to go home and hug their child. That's what I did,” he said.

more interested in their children than they are, or who seeks opportunities to be alone with their children.

Another risk facing children is that of abduction.

An average of 3,900 children are abducted in the United States each year, Smith said – although only about 300 are abducted by strangers.

He said statistics show that most abductions occur in middle-class neighborhoods and less than one-quarter of a mile from the home.

A relatively recent threat – though one that is becoming more and more prevalent – is that posed by child predators in online situations.

Smith said the Internet poses an array of risks for children due to the wide range of inappropriate material online. He noted many Web sites contain material that is sexual in nature – and hateful, harassing and violent as well.

“You won't believe the stuff that people will say to your children on the Internet,” he said.

“If your children go into chat areas, there's a very high

### Child Abuse Detection and Prevention Class

**March 12, 10 a.m. to noon**

Stuttgart Army Community Service  
(Patch Barracks, building 2307)

For information about this and future classes  
call 430-7176/civ. 0711-680-7176.

